SPEECH

OF

HON. TRUMAN SMITH, OF CONN.,

IN SUPPORT OF THE

Bill reported by the Hon. Mr. Rusk, of Texas, from a Select Committee, for the construction of a Railroad and Telegraph line from the Mississippi Valley to the Pacific Ocean,

DELIVERED IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE, FEBRUARY 17, 1853.

Mr. SMITH said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not know but that this subject has already been sufficiently discussed to enlighten the deliberations of the Senate, and to conduct us to such results as shall accord with the public interest. I am a strong friend of this measure, and do not intend it shall be killed off by unnecessary or protracted debate. If, therefore, the Senate will indicate a desire to bring the question at once to the test of a vote, I will resume my seat.

Mr. GWIN. Agreed! let us have a vote.

Mr. COOPER. I desire to address the Senate on the subject, and cannot consent to forego the privileges of the floor.

Several SENATORS, to Mr. SMITH. Go on! Go on!

Mr. SMITH. I must, then, throw myself on the indulgence of the Senate in submitting a few remarks, which I trust will be accorded to me, if for no other reason, in consideration of the fact that I seldom obtrude myself on the notice of this body, and never except to discuss some matter of practical importance. I have taken no part in the discussion of a variety of questions which have been raised here touching our foreign relations, and which have occupied a large portion of our time during the present session, to the exclusion of this and other matters deeply concerning the welfare of the American people. But though we are brought very late to an examination of this bill, I hope enough of time and opportunity remains to enable us to make an enlightened and proper disposition of the question before us. And what, sir, is that question? It is whether we shall now adopt a measure commended to our confidence by the deliberations of some of the ablest and most experienced members of this body.

I confess, Mr. President, I have concluded, contrary to my first impression, that it is my duty to acquiesce in the result of those deliberations, and to give the bill before us, with slight exceptions, my cordial support. It is true I did, very early in the debate, express the opinion that it would be impracticable, during the present short session, so to arrange and settle the general plan and details of a bill as that it would command the support of the two Houses of Congress. I therefore insisted that nothing more could be done than to make provision for such surveys and explorations as would be required for a proper and just appreciation of the subject by the next Congress. But the Select Committee, at the head of which my honorable and excellent friend, the Senator from Texas, [Mr. RUSK,] has been placed, has satisfied me that I was mistaken. They have brought before us a bill which seems to me to have been well considered, and to be substantially right, both in its general plan and details. I am, therefore, for pressing this bill to a vote; I am for taking the judgment of the Senate on the subject, and let those incur the responsibility who would defeat the measure and postpone even the commencement of this work for two years longer. Be it remembered, if we do not act now, no bill can be got through the next Congress until July or August, 1854, and that little or nothing can be done to advance the measure until the spring of 1855. Hence, sir, I rejoice at the success of the committee, and I desire to proffer to them my cordial thanks for their indefatigable labors. If nothing is now done on this important subject, no one can think of laying the blame at their door.

I repeat, Mr. President, I consider this bill substantially right. I do not mean that either the general plan or details are such as I would have proposed. I suppose if every honorable member were to be charged with a subject like this, susceptible of an infinite variety of plans and details, each would adopt a measure having a specific character, and differing from that of every other member. If we are to wait until every member has before him exactly the scheme he would prefer, we should wait until the end of time. I feel myself under an obligation to lay aside my preferences and my notions of what would be best in dealing with such a subject. If I can find in the bill a plan that is practicable, and which does not compromit any great public interest, or violate any fundamental principle, it will be enough for me. I shall feel it to be my duty to accord to it my support.

And what, Mr. President, is the object contemplated by this bill, and what is the scheme by which that object is to be reached? The former is one of the most magnificent which could be proposed to an American Senate, being no less than the establishment of a railroad and telegraphic communication between the navigable waters of the Mississippi river, or one of its tributaries, and those of the Pacific coast, and this, too, wholly within our own territory—an enterprise of vast magnitude, which, when accomplished, cannot fail to produce results of infinite consequence to ourselves, and to the world. The scheme is a moderate one. It does not involve an appropriation of any considerable amount of the public treasure, and certainly no part of the public domain now of

much value, and yet it holds out such encouragements for the investment of private capital, and the enlistment of private enterprise, as to make the execution of the work, within a reasonable period, morally certain. The bill sets aside $20,000,000 for this work, to be advanced as it progresses, and grants in the States alternate sections of the public lands, on each side of the road, for six miles in width, and in the Territories, for twelve miles in width. It makes it the duty of the President, after obtaining the requisite information, to fix the termini and general course of the road, and then directs him to enter into a contract, after public notice, with the lowest bidders, for the construction of the road and telegraphic line, with regulations and details which need not be specified. The contractors are to own the road and line, and to levy tolls subject to the supervision and control of Congress to a certain extent, and are to surrender them up to the United States at the end of thirty years, should Congress so elect on terms which would seem to be equitable and just. In the mean time, they are to be subjected to such burdens by the free transportation of the mails, and the officers, troops, and property of the United States, as are likely, in course of thirty years, to be more than an equivalent for the money advanced and the land granted. The bill also confers on the contractors corporate powers, which would seem to be quite important, if not indispensable, to a proper execution of the contract, the convenience of the parties, and the safety of the capital to be advanced by them.

To this bill the honorable Senator from Pennsylvania [Mr. BRODHEAD] has proposed an amendment, the only effect of which will be to adjourn over the whole project for an indefinite period. He moves to strike out the enacting clause, and to substitute a provision for such explorations and surveys, by and under the direction of the Secretary of War, as he may deem advisable to ascertain the most practicable and economical route, for a railroad from the Mississippi to the Pacific; and also a further provision authorizing and requiring the Secretary to receive proposals from individuals or associations, for the construction of the road, to be laid before Congress at its next session.

This amendment, Mr. President, will, if adopted, be in substance a rejection of the bill, and a repudiation of the labors of the committee. It is certain, that if we are to have a thorough exploration and survey of all the various routes, and the costs of each precisely ascertained so that we may determine which is the most practicable and economical, as an indispensable preliminary to the action of Congress, the work cannot be commenced in many years.

The honorable Senator would seem to contemplate a survey of all possible routes, and of all possible modifications of each route, for in no other way can the question of comparative practicability and economy be settled. Of course he must cause a survey to be made by way of the South Pass to the navigable waters of the Columbia, if not to Puget's Sound, and then, also, by the same pass, to San Francisco. He must cause a survey to be made by way of New Mexico and Walker's Pass, to the Pacific; and then he must take up each of these general routes, and examine all the various modifications which may be suggested. He must also ascertain what is the number of square yards of embankments, excavations, and masonry, which would be required on each route, together with the cost of viaducts, depôts, and other structures, indispensable to the proper working of a railroad. He would be obliged to organize several corps of engineers, and employ them on different parts of the work, and each would have to be protected by detachments from the Army. How long would it take to execute such a work, and what amount of expenditure would be required?

Fortunately, we have the lights of experience to guide us. On the 30th of May next it will be four years since we commenced running the boundary between the United States and Mexico, in conformity with the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The work has not been finished to this day, and has cost us half a million of dollars; and yet at least one half of that boundary consisted of rivers; and with respect to the other half we had nothing to do but to draw a line from point to point on the surface of the earth, and mark it by suitable monuments. How infinitely more vast is the undertaking proposed by the honorable Senator! Estimates of embankments, excavations, masonry, and other matters appertaining to a railroad, would be found to be quite a different affair from merely settling a line, as in the case of the United States and Mexico. I verily believe the surveys that would be necessary to enable Congress to determine which is the most practicable and most economical route would require more time and a larger expenditure of money than the construction of the road itself.

But the honorable Senator [Mr. BRODHEAD] requires the Secretary of War to receive proposals for the construction of a road from the valley of the Mississippi to the Pacific ocean, and to lay them before Congress at the next session. How can proposals be made when the honorable Senator does not condescend to inform us how, when, or where this road is to be constructed? He does not say whether it is to be a road to the Columbia river or to San Francisco, or if to the latter point, whether it shall have its course through the South Pass or by New Mexico;—whether its eastern terminus shall be on the Mississippi or at some point in the western boundary of Arkansas, Missouri, or Iowa;—whether it is to be a road with a single or double track, nor whether it shall be finished in five years or twenty-five. The idea of getting any valuable information for the guidance of Congress in this strange way, cannot of course be seriously entertained by one so eminently practical as the honorable mover. Without intending any disrespect to the Senator, I have to say I consider his proposition a mere evasion of the question before us. I think it would be better to reject the bill at once, than to adopt a measure so utterly futile and impracticable. I understood him to avow, with a commendable frankness, that his object is to defeat the bill; but I think it would be more manly and more statesmanlike to defeat it by a direct and positive negation, rather than by a substitution which on its face amounts to nothing and can come to nothing.

Without dwelling any further on the substitute which has been offered by the honorable and very worthy Senator from Pennsylvania, I proceed to say that there are three different methods which can be adopted, to provide for the construction of this work. The first is to make it exclusively a Government work, to be executed by the national Executive, in conformity with the directions of Congress, and at the proper cost of the national Treasury. It is believed that great advantages would attend this plan, provided the contract system be adopted, and the contractors be compensated in part out of the public domain. The contract system would, in my judgment, be indispensable to a proper economy. If it were executed

after the fashion of the Cumberland road, I do not hesitate to say it would cost three or four times as much as it ought to cost. But by letting the road out in sections to the lowest bidders, I suppose the outlay could be brought within reasonable limits, and would not greatly exceed the cost of roads constructed by private enterprise and capital in various parts of the country. If, then, we were to add compensation in part from the public domain, in the usual manner, the requisitions on the Treasury would be reduced so low that they could be promptly met without serious inconvenience to any branch of the public service. But this scheme is not now before us, and therefore I need not dwell on it further.

A second method would be to make the construction of the road exclusively a private undertaking, and to put the work into the hands of such citizens as may be disposed to furnish the requisite capital, and would execute the work on the most favorable terms for the public; leaving it to their own sagacity and sense of interest to fix its termini and general course, together with all the details of location, making them such compensation in land, or money, or both, as may be deemed adequate, just, and equitable. It is safe to say that whatever would be best for the stockholders in respect to the location and general course of the road, would be quite likely, nay, morally certain, to accord with the public interests. The sagacity and shrewdness of private enterprise would be no unsafe arbiter of questions which it might be difficult to settle in the two Houses of Congress.

The third method is the one which we have before us; it is the intermediate method, where governmental control and capital is combined to some extent with individual control and capital. The Government is to fix the termini of the road, and its general course throughout, and the details of location and execution of the work is to be confided to such citizens as may be disposed to furnish the capital requisite for the consummation of this great enterprise. I need not, Mr. President, enter into a comparison of these three methods. The honorable committee have seen fit to adopt the last, and I can see no superior advantages in either of the two former to induce me to reject the latter. I therefore have made up my mind to support it.

But there are some objections which have been made to this plan, which I wish to notice briefly. They have been examined, and as I humbly conceive, refuted with signal ability by my honorable and excellent friend, the Senator from Tennessee, [Mr. Bell,] who has just resumed his seat.

It has been asserted by honorable Senators, and among others the honorable Senator from South Carolina, [Mr. Butler,] to whose opinions I have ever been disposed to listen with deference and respect, that this bill proposes to confer on the Executive, or the chief of the incoming Administration, a power which is unprecedented in the history of the country. I fully admit the extent and magnitude of the power proposed to be conferred. To fix the termini of this road, and to lay down or establish its general course, is to decide questions which deeply concern the welfare of the whole country; and yet I cannot see how we can do better than to place the disposition of these questions in the hands of the Executive. I think we can do so, under the circumstances of the case, with safety and propriety.

I am apprehensive, Mr. President, that I shall be obliged to pay a poor compliment to the two Houses of Congress, for I am constrained to say, as the result of many years' observation, that I have as much confidence in the impartiality, sound discretion, and high sense of patriotism and duty, of the President elect—nay, a good deal more—than I have in the collective judgment and wisdom of the two Houses of Congress. I am not among those who share the responsibility of his elevation to the Presidency. I supported, with whatever of effort I was capable, another citizen, who had rendered his country services such as no man now living can boast of, and who, I thought, by his great experience, his generous and patriotic course, his unspotted life, and his transcendent abilities, was entitled to fill the chief executive office. But my wishes, my opinions, and my efforts, were overruled, and, like a good citizen, I cheerfully acquiesce in the result. The President elect has received a high expression of the confidence of his countrymen. The North and the South, the East and the West, supported him with unexampled unanimity, and it is my sincere desire that his Administration may be successful—may conduce to the prosperity of the American people, and to the success of our free system of government. I shall oppose to that Administration no factious opposition, and shall be governed, on all occasions, by a proper sense of right and of duty.

And what, after all, is this power to be vested in the hands of the Executive, which some honorable Senators seem to suppose so tremendous? Why may we not confide it to the Executive, and where is the hazard? Do we not at every session appropriate from forty to fifty millions of dollars for various branches of the public service, and is not the expenditure of these vast sums confided, in a great degree, to Executive discretion and Executive agency?

In the present instance he will have only to fix the termini and general course of the proposed road; and coming, as he does, from New England, from the remote East, his mind will be free from all bias, and in a condition to dispose of the question on its true merits. It seems to be an assumption here that the President is to settle this matter by his own unaided judgment; but it is not so. He will, in the first place, have the counsel and assistance of his Cabinet, composed of no less than seven citizens of the country (I shall venture to presume) of high ability and standing. He will also have the power to organize a board of officers, if he shall be pleased to do so. It will be his duty to cause the surveys to be made in advance, and to obtain all the requisite information to enable him and those whom he may call to his assistance, to determine what should be done. I desire to know whether results, such as the President would be likely to arrive at, with all the surveys and explorations before him, and with the assistance of his Cabinet, and, as the case may be, of a board of officers of distinguished ability, would not be quite as likely to accord with the public interests as any judgment we shall get from the two Houses of Congress? I hope I shall not be considered out of order when I say that the two Houses have reduced themselves to such a state, that they are competent to do little more than pass the general appropriation bills, and that they do after a sad fashion. In the House of Representatives I believe it is seldom in order to do what should be done, and nearly the whole of the public business there has to be transacted in violation of the rules, or, in other words, by suspending them. Here we have no previous question, no means of closing a debate. Hence nearly the whole of every session is occupied in discussing a few topics, and those, too frequently, of no practical importance, and much the larger proportion of the

business before us we are obliged to act on without debate, or not act on it at all. We have so much liberty of debate, that we really have none at all as to most of the matters calling for the action of Congress. Hence, after many weary months in listening, with what patience we can muster, to never-ending disquisitions, relating to anything else than legitimate subjects of legislation, we find the moment at hand when the session must be closed. We then snatch up the appropriation bills and hurl them through the two Houses, much as shot may be thrown out of a shovel. Nobody knows what they are, or what they provide for, unless the honorable members of the Committee on Finance of the Senate, and on Ways and Means of the House, be exceptions. What a rush do we witness, of secretaries, clerks, and messengers, to and from the two Houses, and to and from each and the Executive, all in hot haste, lest this or that appropriation should be lost by the advent of the inexorable hour.

Now, suppose all the surveys and explorations contemplated by the honorable Senator from Pennsylvania should be made, and all the different routes estimated, planned, and laid down on maps, (the world would hardly contain the books which would be written,) and the whole of this vast amount of information should be pitched into the two Houses of Congress, what would become of it? What chance would there be that the subject would receive a dispassionate and a proper examination? Should we not have interminable debates, and either no result or a very unfortunate one, rushed through on the very heel of the session? And, then, what heart-burnings, what jealousies, what sectional dissensions should we not have! Would not the opponents of this policy, reinforced by those who are dissatisfied with this or that location, be sure to defeat the whole scheme? Indeed, on the question whether the fixing of the termini and the general course of the road shall or shall not be referred to the Executive Departments, depends, in my judgment, the question whether we shall or shall not have a railroad to the Pacific. The committee have hit on the only practicable scheme. With the President, there will be a proper sense of responsibility, high intelligence, and a just appreciation of the true interests of the country. I am satisfied there will be no want of either inclination, ability, or effort, on the part of the incoming Executive, to make a wise and safe disposition of this entire matter. It is possible that a reference to the President may cause a location contrary to my present impressions of expediency. I prefer the route by the South Pass, if practicable, because from thence we can branch to Oregon; whereas, if the southern route be taken that will be impossible. But I am for a road anyhow, whether North or South. Besides, I believe we shall have a railroad within twenty-five years, between the Mississippi and the Columbia or Puget's Sound. I believe it with almost as much confidence as I do in my personal identity; and I do not concur at all in the opinion expressed by my honorable friend from Pennsylvania, [Mr. Cooper,] the other day, that the snows would render a railroad impracticable at the South Pass. If such roads can be worked to advantage in New England, Canada, and even in Russia, in the winter season, I am quite sure there can be no barrier to their use at all times at the point mentioned, and even at a much higher latitude.

It is also insisted that it is improper to pass this bill for the reason that the surveys and explorations have not been had which have usually been deemed an important, if not an indispensable, preliminary to legislative action on such a subject. If we were about to fix the termini and general course of the road, this objection would have great weight; but when these points are to be referred to the Executive, and when the bill directs these very surveys and explorations to be made as a basis for his decision, it obviously has no force. I have already, in opposing the amendment of the honorable Senator from Pennsylvania, [Mr. Brodhead,] stated fully my objections to surveys and estimates in detail of all the various routes, and of the modifications of each route with a view to comparison, and an accurate and precise calculation on their economy or cheapness. I say, if this is to be done, there is not a Senator in this Chamber who will live to see the day when the work is commenced. I maintain, moreover, that such fullness and precision of survey and of estimates is wholly unnecessary. In such a vast undertaking, one or two millions the one way or the other is of no importance, and it would be folly in the extreme to waste ten millions in order to save one or two. With respect to the practicability of the work, much is already known. We need, for example, no survey, to satisfy us that we can construct a road to the South Pass, and from thence to the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada. The assent from the Missouri to the pass is so very gradual as not to be perceptible to the traveler; but when he comes to test the elevation by the barometer, he finds himself, if I do not misrecollect the figures, from six to seven thousand feet above tide water.

Every one admits we can build a railroad from the Missouri to the Sierra Nevada, but whether we can get over that mountain is a matter of doubt. The Sierra would have to be explored through several degrees of latitude and all the passes carefully examined. This would be the only point on that route of serious difficulty. On the southern route several points would require examination. It would be necessary to examine the ridge between the waters of the Mississippi or its tributaries and those of the Rio Grande; also the ridge between the waters of the Rio Grande and those of the Colorado, and also the ridge between the waters of the Colorado and those of the San Joaquin. This would involve an exploration of all the mountain passes. Probably the grades would have to be ascertained at all the difficult points on each route, and then the question, whether of practicability or economy, must be decided either by Congress, or, as proposed in this bill, by the Executive. I believe all the information requisite to a proper disposition of the subject could be obtained in a single season, and then we can commence the construction of the road at an early day. Having determined on the point of departure and the general course of the road, the surveys and estimates in detail can then be made with safety, economy, and dispatch. You will need no detachments of the Army to protect your surveyors. Large bodies of men will be employed on the road, who will hold in check and probably keep at a distance the savages of those regions. It will be necessary ordinarily to survey only one or two hundred miles in advance of the road as it progresses, and then the road itself will facilitate the passage of the surveyors to and fro, and the transportation of their supplies, and this will greatly reduce the expenses of the operation. Indeed it is, in my judgment, indispensable that surveys and construction should go forward at the same time, and in no other way could the former be accomplished without an enormous outlay. Every one must see at a glance that the construc,

tion of the road in part will greatly facilitate surveys in advance.

If, for example, the President were to decide that the point of departure should be at or near Independence, Missouri, and if we commence the construction, and carry the road forward, say four hundred miles, it is obvious that this would aid essentially surveys for the next one hundred miles. Probably the cost of such survey would not be one tenth part what it would be were the work undertaken without the aid of the road. The combination, therefore, of the two operations to some extent, is indispensable to economy if not practicability. And what is more, on the plan here advocated, the parties who make the contract will have to be at all the expense of these surveys and estimates in detail. They need not cost this Government one penny. All, therefore, we should provide for, are such explorations and surveys as would enable the Executive to fix the termini and general course of the road, and precise estimates and calculations, such as are ordinarily laid before our State Legislatures in cases of this sort, are impracticable and unattainable. The case is a peculiar one; the object is to connect the two sides of a vast continent, and the intermediate space is a wilderness thronged with savages. Explorations and surveys are alike difficult and dangerous, and to apply to such a case the rules ordinarily observed by our State Legislatures, is absurd and ridiculous. The necessities of an undertaking so novel and unexampled, will furnish laws by which we should regulate our conduct.

I wish now, Mr. President, to assign briefly the reasons by which, as I conceive, the policy of this bill can be vindicated. It is not pretended that either private citizens, or the authorities of the States through which the road must run in part, can undertake its construction. The States have no power to act in the Territories, and have not, moreover, resources adequate to an enterprise of such vast magnitude. The work, therefore, must be executed by the authority of Congress, and at the expense of the National Treasury, at least in part, if it is to be executed at all.

I have then to say, Mr. President, in the first place, that the construction of this road will tend powerfully to develop the internal resources of the country. It will open a vast breadth of the public lands, now inaccessible, to speedy settlement. It will also bring within our grasp the mineral wealth of the remote interior, particularly in copper, and other metals of great economic value, to say nothing of gold and silver. It is well known that there are in New Mexico, on the Gila river, extensive and very productive copper mines; and I was informed, not long since, by an intelligent officer of the United States Army, that there are similar mines in northern Texas. Whether the road will, if constructed, take the direction of these mines I cannot, of course, say, but in any event it is highly probable that much would be gained to the country by the mineral developments which it would occasion wherever located. I say nothing of the addition which may possibly be made to the inexhaustible supplies of the precious metals which we already enjoy. I have, I confess, some serious misgivings in regard to this business of gold hunting. I fear it is an avocation not exactly calculated to induce those habits of steadiness, sobriety, economy, and self-denial, which are important to the well-being of society. What our people want is steady employment, and moderate gains. I indulge, however, no inconsiderable hopes that the experience of the world will be reversed in California, and that our citizens there will prove all that the friends of free institutions could desire.

I insist, Mr. President, in the next place, that this road will promote our internal trade and commerce. Much of the surplus products of the agriculture of the country will be turned over this road to California, and thus the eastern markets will be relieved, and agriculture everywhere benefited. If we could find on the shores of the Pacific a market for the products of even a few of the western States, it would be an immense benefit to all sections. The great difficulty with our agriculture is over production. Any considerable surplus of any crop, will frequently cast down its aggregate value a hundredfold more than the value of the surplus itself; hence by taking off from our eastern markets some portion of the pressure from the West, by opening a vent in the direction of the Pacific, we shall confer an incalculable benefit on agriculture in every part of the Union. The good effect will be as sensibly felt in Virginia and North Carolina as in Illinois and Missouri. It is believed, also, that the manufacturers of the eastern and middle States will find a market for their fabrics over this road. This will certainly be true of the lighter articles, as in trade and business, speed and time are often the great elements, and will overrule all other considerations.

The construction of this road will facilitate in a high degree intercommunication between the eastern and western sides of the continent, and will save to our people much of time, money, and life. A journey to and from California, by way of the Isthmus, cannot now be performed much, if any short of two months, and the expenses amount to $500 at least. The hazards to life by that route are considerable, but nothing in comparison with those of the route direct across the continent. Thousands of our citizens have been committed to premature graves, in seeking new homes on the shores of the Pacific, and evidences of mortality everywhere attend the footsteps of the traveler from the eastern to the western side of the Rocky mountains. No doubt the saving to the country by means of this road would in all these forms be immense. The lives of virtuous, intelligent, and upright citizens are inappreciable, but we can form some idea of how much would be saved of money and of time, (which is said to be money,) when this road shall be constructed and the transit from the Mississippi to the Pacific can be effected in a single week. It is not too much to say that the aggregate would amount annually to six per cent. interest on the whole capital required to build the road.

This measure, I again remark, will contribute powerfully to the extension of our external trade and commerce. It is difficult to form now an adequate conception of the effect which a well-constructed, well-appointed, and well-managed railroad, connecting the waters of the Mississippi with those of the Pacific, would have on the business relations of the world. It would probably ere long result in a great commercial revolution, and make the United States the thoroughfare of Europe in going to and from China, and other Oriental countries. Its tendency to build up our commercial emporium, and to advance it towards a supremacy even in competition with London, would be great, and might prove decisive.

The road, when constructed, will enable us to bring into subjection the wild Indian tribes roaming over the interior of this continent, who have been for years harassing the frontiers, particularly those of Texas, and doing infinite mischief there and elsewhere. We shall also by such means

find ourselves in a condition to fulfill our treaty obligations to Mexico in respect to these Indians, to which we have hitherto paid little attention. By the eleventh article of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, we have bound ourselves in the most positive and peremptory manner, to restrain forcibly the incursions of the savages from the United States into Mexico. I have before me that article, and it was my purpose to read it to the Senate, and comment on it, as I do not believe honorable Senators are aware how stringent its terms are, and how high the obligations which we have assumed, to keep those Indians within our own borders; but I will not do so, as I wish to bring my remarks to a conclusion as soon as possible.

This measure will greatly economize the administration of the Departments of War and General Post Office. It will reduce the expenses of our Army, particularly in the Quartermaster and Commissary's Departments. The costs of transportation are now enormous. The troops are largely employed far in the interior of the continent, many hundred miles beyond any railroad or water communication, and all their supplies have to be dragged after them at a frightful expense. This cause has contributed more than any other to swell the appropriations for the Army to such an enormous amount. I intended to have looked into the particulars, but I have not had time to do so. No doubt the additions amount to several millions annually, much, if not all of which, will be saved by the construction of this road; besides, there will be a great saving in the transportation of the mail. A semi-monthly mail to and from California now costs us about one million of dollars per annum, which alone will pay the interest on the $20,000,000 to be advanced to promote the road. And then we are to have soon a weekly mail, and it is not too much to say that the expenditure for the mail service will for the next two years run up to $1,500,000 per annum, not over one third of which will be reimbursed in the form of postages. Besides, the road will economize the mail service in California itself, and it will expedite transportation both for the Army and General Post Office vastly, and thus much will be gained to both branches of the public service. Be it remembered that the bill provides in express terms that the company who may construct the road, "shall at 'all times, and as often as required, transport on 'said road, and every part of the same, the mails, 'troops, seamen, officers of the Army and Navy, 'officers and agents of the Government and of the 'Post Office Department while on duty, arms, 'ammunition, munitions of war, Army and Navy 'stores, funds, or property belonging to the United 'States free from all charges to the Government, 'giving the United States at all times the prefer-'ence;" and it provides also for the free use of the telegraphic line by the United States. I do not hesitate then to conclude, that in the Post Office Department we will save enough to pay the interest on the amount to be advanced by the Government, and more than enough in the Quartermaster's and Commissary's Departments to reimburse the principal long before the bonds for $20,000,000 will become due, if issued in conformity with this bill. Nothing is more certain than that this road and telegraph line need not cost the Government one cent, while blessings and benefits will result from their construction in every way.

But there are other advantages which will accrue from this great enterprise: Should the road take its course by the South Pass and Salt Lake, it will give a permanent supremacy to our laws and Constitution in that part of the continent. Some have apprehended (I trust without any sufficient reason) that a turbulent and insurrectionary power is about to spring up there, which would ere long become troublesome to the country and dangerous to its peace. It is certain that a few thousand resolute men, well armed, and planted in the very recesses of the Rocky Mountains, could not be reduced to subjection without enormous sacrifices both of life and money. The necessity of any such sacrifices will be obviated by the construction of this road. Indeed its effect will be to establish such intimate relations between the Salt Lake district and other parts of the country as to obviate all danger of disloyal movements in that quarter, if any such exist.

If, on the other hand, the road should pass through New Mexico, other advantages will result, of little if any less importance. It would in a short time work a great moral, intellectual, and political revolution in that unfortunate country; or, in other words, it would Americanize New Mexico. It appears from the report of Colonel Sumner, of the United States Army, communicated to Congress by the Secretary of War at the present session, that the people there are by idleness, ignorance, and vice reduced to the lowest stage of degradation and infamy. He says:

"There is no probability of any change for the better. Twenty—fifty years hence, this Territory will be precisely the same it is now. There never can be any inducement for any class of our people to come here whose example would improve this people. Speculators, adventurers, and the like, are all that will come, and their example are rather pernicious than beneficial.

"No civil government emanating from the Government of the United States can be maintained here without the aid of a military force—in fact, without its being virtually a military government. I do not believe there is an intelligent man in the Territory who is not at the present time fully sensible of this truth. All branches of this civil government have equally failed—the executive for want of power, the judiciary from the total incapacity and want of principle in juries, and the legislative from want of knowledge, a want of identity with our institutions, and an extreme reluctance to impose taxes; so much so that they have never even provided the means to subsist prisoners, and consequently felons of all kinds are running at large.

"The New Mexicans are thoroughly debased, and totally incapable of self government, and there is no latent quality about them that can ever make them respectable citizens. They have more Indian blood than Spanish, and are in some respects below the Pueblo Indians, for they are not as honest or industrious. In this remark I allude to the lower classes—there are some educated gentlemen with respectable families; about enough for magistrates and other official persons. There is not much increase in the population, owing to their gross depravity. I doubt if there is a tribe of Indians on this continent who are more abandoned in their commerce between the sexes than the great majority of this people."

This is certainly a very dismal account of the state of things in New Mexico, but not more dismal than I believe it to be truthful. A state of things which will continue to the end of time, unless we make the country accessible to our people by a railroad. This would work a speedy and a highly salutary revolution. But so long as New Mexico remains in her present situation, we shall have a standing commentary on the folly of acquiring so remote a country, and of bringing under our jurisdiction a people so truly wretched.

But, Mr. President, I now come to a consideration which I deem of high importance, and which I would urge on the particular attention of the Senate. I maintain that the construction of this road is not only important, but indispensable to the defense of our Pacific possessions. It is, I believe, within the constitutional competency of Congress to carry a road through even a State for this purpose. When the case is as urgent as the present, we can vindicate the work precisely for the reasons which would justify the erection of a fort-

ress to bar the entrance into the Bay of San Francisco. It is not only the most effectual, but the cheapest measure of defense which could be adopted. What is the condition of the Pacific coast now, and what will it continue to be without a railroad? Defenseless, perfectly defenseless. And if a war were to break out with any leading European Power, how long could we hold those possessions? Honorable gentlemen seem to be disposed to assert here what they denominate the Monroe doctrine, in such a manner as would be very likely to lead to a war. If you thus bring on a collision with Great Britain or France, what would become of San Francisco and the other towns situated on the bay of that name? What would become of your Mint and your navy-yard? Sir, that bay is left in such a situation that a miserable privateer, with half a dozen guns, could enter it and lay the city of San Francisco under contribution; an inconsiderable force could ravage the whole coast of California. I do not say they could conquer the State, but I do say they could do infinite mischief. I want, therefore, to hear no more of your Monroe doctrine until you have made some provision for the defense of the Pacific coast. I am for adjourning over the doctrine—Tehuantepec and all other topics of excitation—until this railroad can be constructed. The latter would seem to me an indispensable preliminary to the former. Place us in such a situation that we can in one month throw fifty thousand men on that coast, and you may explode your Monroe doctrine in face of all Europe, for aught I care. We shall then be in a much better situation to defend than any enemy can be to assail. If we have underrated the assailing force, the telegraph will flash the intelligence to Washington, and in ten days we could repair the error by reinforcement. Indeed the mere existence of the road would obviate all danger of attack by any other than a naval force. What European Power would think of sending an army to the Pacific, when they knew that we could meet them with a force of tenfold power by the agency of the proposed railroad? To say that it is inexpedient or unconstitutional to provide for the emergencies of war by the means proposed, is the same thing as to assert that the defense of the country is no part of the duty of this Government. Congress a few sessions since directed a dock, basin and railway to be constructed at the navy-yard in California. So that it seems we have a right to get our ships on to railways. Why not our Army?

But there are difficulties likely to result from a war with one of the leading Powers of Europe, other than those already alluded to. If we suppose that we could defend the city of San Francisco, and protect our navy-yard and Mint, it would undoubtedly be in the power of the public enemy to blockade the whole coast, and cut off the transmission of gold from the Pacific to the Atlantic. A good deal has been said in the debates which we have had during the session on our foreign relations—about our having Great Britain under bonds to keep the peace, by means of our cotton bales; but I would ask honorable Senators to look at our own condition. Are there not bonds for good behavior resting upon us, and that too of a pretty serious character? What if your Monroe doctrine should involve us in a war with Great Britain, and she should, by a blockade of the coast, interrupt the communication between California and the Isthmus, how should we get our regular supply of gold? Or if we should escape that difficulty, and be able to land the precious metal on the Isthmus, how could we get it forward to New York? Honorable Senators have expressed a great deal of alarm in regard to what Great Britain has done and may do at the Bay Islands, but in my judgment, it is a question of little importance. With her ascendency on the ocean, she could, whether she does or does not hold those islands, cut off all intercourse between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, by stationing a superior force on this or the other side, or on both; the result will be the same, whether you have a route by the Isthmus, Nicaragua, or Tehuantepec. Your communications will be interrupted in the event of a war with a superior naval Power, and then what will be the condition of the country, and what will become of our national and commercial credit? The whole of our currency and all of our business engagements and relations are being constituted on the basis of a regular supply of at least five millions of gold per month from California. Indeed, the supply is believed to be much larger, as the gold sent on freight is understood to amount to five millions, and it is known that a large amount reaches New York and other important points by the hands of passengers. What would become of your banks if this supply should be suddenly cut off? They would, every one of them, be blown into the air, and commercial credit would receive such a shock as has never been witnessed in this country. The very moment the war broke out, our national finances would be thrown into disorder and confusion, and the credit of the Government would sink with that of the commercial classes. This monthly supply of gold has got to be just as necessary to us as the cotton bales are to England. A fleet of steamers stationed at Jamaica would effectually arrest the transmission of gold by the Isthmus. The mere apprehension of danger would be enough. Suppose you were to drive Great Britain out of Roatan and the rest of the Bay Islands, will that make your freights of gold safe? Would it do to provoke her to a contest by exploding in her face a half dozen pieces of ordnance, well charged with the "Monroe doctrine?" Something was said here, on a former occasion, about the Gulf of Mexico being a "*mare clausum*"—an American sea. It is a curious sort of "closed sea," with Great Britain in possession of Jamaica and other islands on one side of it.

I maintain that an effectual interruption of this supply of gold, even for a few months, would be almost fatal to currency and credit. The time is near at hand when California will send us $10,000,000 per month, and perhaps even more; and the loss of this supply, even for three months, would be most seriously felt. The Government would be crippled at the very outset of any war in which we might be involved, and incapacitated in some degree for sacrifices and efforts such as our national honor and interests might require. We should be obliged to have the gold any how, and this could only be done by the inland route. You would be obliged to organize caravans for its transmission, which you would have to protect by detachments from the Army. An escort of at least five hundred men would be required to each caravan, as fifteen or twenty millions in gold would hold out temptations which might lead to combinations and aggressions of a dangerous character. And, then, only think of such a caravan "dragging its slow length along," over mountains and deserts, and reaching the city of New York in about six months. In the mean time, and at the very outset of the war, all your banks will have been exploded, your merchants bankrupted, commercial credit broken down, and alarm and distrust spread through all departments of business, and all the ramifications of society. Prob

ably your Government would be placed in such a situation that it could not borrow a dollar. But, whether this would be so or not, it is certain that the interruption of the supply at the outset of a war, even for three months, would occasion disasters and losses to the Government and people more than equal to the whole cost of this road. The regular transmission of this gold is just as necessary for the national safety and defense as a good supply of powder and ball; and yet honorable Senators tell us we have no right to construct this road. One Senator has a stitch in his conscience on the score of constitutionality. He denies our power to adopt this measure, and insists it is violative of the Constitution. Another Senator has a stitch on the score of expediency, or rather he is for the measure as highly wise and proper, but not now; only adjourn it over to the next Congress, and let us have the surveys. O! the surveys! let us have the surveys! But now is the hour, in my judgment, for taking the initiative in respect to this great enterprise, and I ask it in the name of preparation for war which may come, for which we should be prepared. I ask it as a measure having an important bearing on credit and currency, and as indispensable to both in case of a war with a superior naval power; and I ask it that we may be well prepared on both coasts to repel aggression, and to assert the rights and maintain the honor and the dignity of the American people.

But it must not be inferred from these remarks that I view war with approbation. I can hardly conceive of a war short of one strictly defensive, which I should look upon with complacency. I think men die fast enough anyhow. There is no necessity of calling into requisition gunpowder to hasten them into eternity. I am for peace and for cultivating the arts of peace. I am for constructing this railroad in order that we may have peace. I verily believe that the consummation of this vast enterprise would do more to cause us to be respected, nay, to be feared by the nations of the earth, than the erection of twenty fortresses, or the construction of forty ships-of-the-line.

There is another consideration to which I would refer, and which, I doubt not, will be properly appreciated by the Senate. The construction of this road is indispensable to the consolidation of our Union, and to bind the two sides of the continent together by the strong ties of mutual dependence and reciprocal interests. Without the means of prompt and easy communication, it would be better not to have a country on the other side of the Rocky Mountains. The existing state of things is utterly objectionable. I was, in the first instance, strongly opposed to the acquisition of California; but as she has been admitted into the family circle, and now constitutes one of the brightest stars of our national galaxy, I am for holding on to her. I have no idea that her people are or will be disloyal to our Union, but I wish to establish more intimate relations between her and her sister States—those of immediate vicinage, and that a railroad will do. When this is done, no centrifugal force can throw her out of her orbit, but she will maintain her proper place in our system, and will revolve around the common center to the end of all time. Besides, how is this General Government to exercise its functions in California without this railroad, whether in war or peace? Suppose there is an incursion of savages upon the people of some part of that State, and it becomes necessary to repel them. Suppose the officers of the Army or Indian agents need instructions from the Executive at Washington, how are they to obtain them? Why, it requires two sea-voyages to get the information to Washington, and two more to get the instructions back, taking up, I suppose, from two to three months.

Again: suppose there is an insurrection in California, or a sudden attack by some foreign foe, would there not be a necessity for means of immediate communication with the General Government? Suppose some doubt should arise at San Francisco in respect to the construction of your revenue laws. A cargo of goods arrives, and the collector is of the opinion it should pay one rate of duty, and the owner insists on a lower rate, and the collector desires the instructions of the Secretary of the Treasury on the subject, would not the delay of two voyages by sea to reach Washington, and two to get back, be intolerable? Would it not be ruinous to all concerned? How are your post office laws to be administered in California? How are you to administer this Government there at all, without this railroad? If the collector of San Francisco should die, how long must business be interrupted before his place can be filled? If a judge should die, how long must the court be closed and justice delayed? Nothing can be more embarrassing than the dispensation of patronage in California on account of the distance. It is almost impossible to get reliable information, and this the present Administration have experienced to their sorrow. If the distinguished gentleman who is coming here soon to stand at the head of the Government does not encounter similar difficulties, I shall be greatly disappointed. I maintain that such a state of things is intolerable, and I think we should not occupy ourselves with any miserable controversy about the Bay Islands or Tehuantepec, but should at once take hold and construct this railroad as a sovereign remedy for all the evils here adverted to. I want no railroad over foreign countries, unless it be for temporary purposes. I am for an American railroad, to be constructed on American soil, by the enterprise and capital of the American people.

Sir, I have occupied more of the time of the Senate than I intended, but have abbreviated my remarks as much as possible. I have given a mere outline of ideas, some of which may not have occurred to honorable Senators. I now leave the subject in the hands of the Senate. I hope we shall have a vote on it speedily. I hope the bill will pass the Senate, even if it does not pass the House. Should it fail to become a law at this session, I hope the subject will be resumed at the next, at the earliest practicable day. I have two years more, if my life is spared, to remain a member of this body, and if this measure is not now consummated, I will consecrate whatever energies I may have, and whatever ability I can command, to its prosecution at the next Congress. I have also to say to the honorable Senator from Texas, [Mr. Rusk,] who has so intelligently, patriotically, and ably advocated this bill, that I will then stand by him, and go with him, hand to hand and shoulder to shoulder, in efforts to carry through the Senate the proper legislation on this subject. I demand the construction of this railroad as a great American measure—as one which is called for by many weighty considerations—as necessary to enable this Government to exercise its proper functions in time of peace and indispensable to both sides of the continent in time of war, and as adapted in a high degree to promote the stability of our glorious Union, and the prosperity of the whole people.